BEneath the outer husk of fable, Truth lies hid, & can be known only to him who looks upon it & considers it close at hand. There is another poetic legend of the inventor of this Attic letter, which I will set down here in brief. It is to the effect that Apollo once loved a comely young man named Hyacinthus, with so great a love that he kept him always in his sight & by his side. One day Apollo was amusing himself by throwing a huge vessel into the air, to test his strength & increase it by exercise; and once, when he had thrown the said vessel, Hyacinthus passed under it, so that it fell upon him and he was killed. Apollo was so grieved, because of his great beauty and of the great love he had for him, that to atone for his life, which by an evil chance had been taken from him, he transformed him into a lily, of a purple hue, which is called in Paris *lisflambe,* and made in the said lily two letters, Y and A, which we can still see there in some sort, traced in black and yellow on the petals of the lily. The whole plant is called by some doctors H IPIΣ, by others Gladiolus. The root has a sweet odour, and is mixed with other sweet-smelling things for keeping linen in chests. Marcellus Virgilius, Florentine scrivener, & commentator on Dioscorides, takes great pains, at Chapter LVIII* of Book IIII of said Dioscorides, to give it to be understood that Hyacinthus is the lily which the Parrhisians call *lisflambe;* but I will quote only a few words now, & these are as follows: *Siquidem parum deflexa ab Hyacintho antiqua voce Irim Florentia adhuc passim Hyacinthiolum nominat.* 'It is certain,' he says, 'that the Florentine tongue still calls the plant which is otherwise called Iris, *Hyacinthiol,* by changing the ancient vowel.' I have also heard and learned from the Florentines & other well-informed Italians that the *lisflambe* is called in vulgar Italian *Hyacinthiol.* For which reason it seems to me, under correction, that Hyacinthus and *lisflambe* are one & the same. Let him who would know more about it read the said Commentaries of Marcellus Virgilius, & he will find there all he needs. Ovid, the fountain-head of sweetly flowing Latin verse, narrates this fable very fully & clearly in his *Metamorphoses*, near the beginning of Book X; but I will quote at this time only a portion of it, as follows:—

* *The passage quoted occurs in the Commentary on Chapter* LXI.

Talia dum vero memorantur Apollinis ore,
Ecce cruor qui fusus humi signauerat herbas
Desinit esse cruor tyrioque nitentior ostro
Flos oritur, formamque capit, quam lilia, si non
Purpureus color his; argenteus esset in illis.
Non satis hoc Phœbo est, is enim fuit autor honoris,
Ipse suos gemitus folijs inscribit et hya
Flos habet inscriptum, funestaque littera ducta est.*

* *Ovid, Metam.*, x, 209.[23]

That is to say: while Apollo poured forth his grief-stricken lamentations, the blood of the comely Hyacinthus flowed down the grass, and being redder than scarlet, grew into a flower, & took the shape of a lily, yet not of a white and silvery colour, as the lily properly is, but of the hue of the *lisflambe,* which is purple. And this did not content Apollo, otherwise called Phœbus, for, desirous to be the creator of the renown of Hyacinthus, he wrote his lamentations on the petals of the flower of the *lisflambe,* placing thereon these two fatal letters in black, Y and A. The better to explain Ovid's words, I have placed here a picture of the *lisflambe,* nearer to reality than it has been possible for me to describe it in words.

VIrgil, too, in the third Eclogue of his *Bucolics,* refers to this legend in very strange fashion, under the guise of an enigma & obscure words, when he introduces Damœtas and Menalcas, shepherds, contending in song, and Menalcas, in his turn, says:

Dic quibus in terris inscripti
nomina regum
Nascantur flores, et Phyllida
solus habeto.

That is to say: Tell me, in what countries are born flowers inscribed with the names of kings, & take for yourself alone the pretty shepherdess, Phyllis. Servius Maurus, commentator on Virgil, says that the enigma may be understood to mean Ajax as well as Hyacinthus, because Ajax also was fabled to have been changed